

Politicians in Uniform

Suriname's Bedeviled Revolution

By Gary Brana-Shute

Democracy is not alive and well in Suriname: nor, for that matter, is gross authoritarianism. The current atmosphere in Paramaribo is one of confusion, tension, uncertainty, and insecurity. On February 25, 1980, an extraordinary event, alien to Surinamese experience, occurred in the former Dutch colony. The constitutionally established government toppled in an unexpected and almost blood-free coup d'etat carried out by sixteen army non-commissioned officers. Shortly thereafter they organized themselves into the ruling National Military Council. The composition of this council as well as the extent of its formal and informal powers have been in a state of flux. Fourteen months have since gone by and well defined programs for serious and sustained social change supported by a coherent ideology are barely embryonic. Except for the most basic details and the sparsest chronological markers there is no public consensus on exactly what happened, why it happened, who is responsible, and where the events are leading the recently independent country.

What Happened in Suriname?

Suriname's many ethnic groups have been both a source of pride and consternation for the former colony. Tourist brochures herald the cuisine, dress, religion, arts, and folk culture of the richly textured East Indian, Afro-Surinamese ("Creole"), Indonesian, Maroon ("Bush Negro"), Chinese, American Indian, European, and Lebanese/Syrian mosaic. Still separated by cultural, educational, occupational, and residential differences, the groups provided Suriname with a ready social formula for recruiting institutional appointments and distributing both patronage and services. Pre-coup politics in Suriname, through the skillful manipulation of politicians, became ethnic with parliamentary democracy perceived of as a arena for the promotion of ethnic group interests. Alliances and counter alliances, sometimes tacit, sometimes explicit, almost always tactical and short term, became the style and content of the "old politics." Actually, no one group ever held complete power in Suriname. Power was always shared — albeit unwillingly — a fact of life that

the post-coup military regime will find tenuous and difficult to dismantle.

The stage for the events of 1980 was set in 1973 when Henk Arron, heir to the largest Creole party, the formidable NPS (Nationale Partij Suriname) effected a coalition that galvanized an uneasy alliance with a smaller Creole party (PSV), the traditional vanguard of the Creole left (PNR), and the largest Indonesian party (KTPI). For seven years through independence in 1975 and reelection in 1978, it worked well enough to keep the huge East Indian and several small left wing parties at bay.

The immediate problem, however, which led to the coup was with the young, non-commissioned officers of the military. Government, as well as the military officer corps, was resistant to the NCOs repeated requests, and later demands, for pay increases, increased promotion opportunities and, above all, government recognition of a military union. At the time, the constitution permitted unions or, more specifically, did not prohibit military unions. The Surinamese officer corps, supported by the government, contemptuously dismissed the request. The reasoning for this decision went deeper than just military policy; the soldiers — NCOs and conscripts alike — were treated as little more than a bunch of lame brain boy scouts.

The military in Suriname has neither a long nor particularly distinguished history. Prior to independence, a part Dutch, part Surinamese army was administered by Dutch officers as part of the Netherlands Overseas Army. Soldiers in uniform were rarely seen on the streets and, in fact, were not even called out to help the police during the tumultuous anti-government strikes of 1973. The army was organized primarily for frontier defense while the police were legally responsible for internal security. There was no formal linkage between the pre-independence army and government. The post-independence army fared little better and, although it was heavily armed, it too remained outside of the decision making system. Unlike Latin American armies they did not have a clearly defined role, tradition, structure, or ideology.

The year long dispute reached a head in February 1980. Extraordinarily mishandled

by Prime Minister Arron, the situation escalated to the point where one third of the army (250 men) occupied a government building and an adjoining park to protest the arrest of three of their NCO leaders. Charged with mutiny, their trial was set for February 26, 1980. The police, Arron's main weapon against the military, armed with carbines and riot shields, cordoned off the courthouse. Meanwhile, a sixteen man commando unit was formed under the leadership of Sergeants Desi Bouterse (34) and Roy Horb (27). Reportedly, their goal was only to free their three compatriots incarcerated at the police station. What happened next is best summed up by one of the commandos: "We only wanted a union but ended up with country."

The well planned and coordinated attacks made on the army barracks and arsenal in Paramaribo with a simultaneous shelling by patrol boat of the riverside police station, raised some doubts as to whether the country was captured by accident. Three hundred soldiers fanned out over Paramaribo, disarmed police, and secured strategic positions. The old government collapsed. The sergeants faced their first problem. They did not have a central public issue other than their own grievances around which to build a widely acceptable rationale for their behavior. The country did not perceive itself in severe crisis nor on the brink of revolution. An appropriate ideology would be difficult to construct. For a month following the coup the situation in Paramaribo was in chaos.

Who's in Charge?

Rumors and conflicting interpretations flew. Some alleged it was a coup from the "right" spearheaded by the leader of the large East Indian party. Others claimed high persons in the left wing PNR were behind it as the former leader of that party was legal council for the three jailed soldiers and whose followers endorsed the requests of the NCOs. However, the general chaos of the following month, the lack of post-coup coordination, and the fact that virtually everybody was keeping quiet and not making a commitment argued that what had occurred was a surprise.

The victorious soldiers claimed that government would soon be returned to civilian hands. The Prime Minister, members of cabinet, and high military officers fled to the interior or left the country. After their simple act of violence the young soldiers found themselves without program, ideology, or organization save an equally young army armed with automatic weapons patrolling the streets of Paramaribo. The President of the Republic (and former colonial governor), Dr. J. Ferrier was retained in office. Parliament, though stripped of power, was not suspended. The scheduled elections were cancelled and political parties prohibited. "Social justice" for the masses was promised while the military secured its position through the arrest and detention of former government officials.

Hampered by their political inexperience the members of the Military Council turned quickly to whom they perceived to be the only friends they had. These tended to be representatives of left wing parties who had backed them in their struggle against Arron. Foremost among this group was one of Suriname's most savvy politicians; Eddie Bruma, lawyer, nationalist, and former leader of the leftist PNR. He was assigned the task of assembling a group of civilians from which the military could select and appoint a cabinet of ministers.

With the approval of the military, Dr. Henk Chin A Sen, a respected physician, colleague of Bruma's during their student days in Holland, and sympathizer of the PNR, was appointed Minister-President (Dr. Ferrier remained as President, a different post). He had no political experience. His cabinet was composed of carefully selected technocrats, many of whom had spent years studying and working in the Netherlands. Soldiers and civilians alike had seen the metropole. An old timer claimed: "The more I think about this, the more I feel it is a revolution of return migrants."

The cabinet's composition reflected unheard of ethnic balance—Creole, East Indian, Indonesian, Chinese, white Surinamer—a spectrum carefully scrutinized by virtually all Surinamers. The elusive Surinamese dream and anathema to the old politics, government with all groups parti-



Illustration by Juan C Urquiola

g. seemed within reach. The constitution had not yet been abolished the victorious soldiers faced a dilemma: they were, in effect, guilty of treason. This was resolved in a special meeting of parliament, during which the new rulers of the country were granted a general amnesty. On March 15, 1980, the newly formulated civilian government was installed. It was to serve in the shadow and at the pleasure of the military.

However, a consensus was not yet formulated. The military leadership and their civilian counterparts knew only that "things" had to change, but not how, or how much. A minority in the National Military Council argued for radical change. They perceived the constitution and the continued presence of President Ferrier as a brake on what was now being called the revolution and, at worst, a vehicle for the return of the old party politics.

The military did not isolate itself from the watchful, cautious citizenry. For days after the coup long lines of aspiring advisors queued up outside the heavily fortified barracks. For the less aggressive, the soldiers hung an "idea box" outside the camp gates. In addition to seeking public endorsement the military picked up information on a variety of sexual infidelity, malicious gossip, and personal misfortune. Suriname again demonstrated its uniqueness: a military junta with a suggestion box. But, this gesture should not be misunderstood. First, it was a naive attempt by a frightened and inexperienced group to maintain and promote "good will" with the citizenry. There was, at this stage, a genuine desire to be liked and respected by the public. Also, they wanted, in their simple way, to communicate with the public outside of the old traditional structures of ethnic political party organs. Neither wish would come true. The military had created a wild west atmosphere in Suriname where normal rules did not apply to those in army uniform. Earlier cases were ludicrous; soldiers in jeeps not obeying traffic policemen or speeding the wrong way up a one way street. A dignified old man told me: "Ach, they are young boys playing big men—but they have the uzi's."

Though the coup was promoted as a revolution it would be months before the concept was defined. The first of Paramaribo's many "public" secrets emerged: the loose coalition of military and civilian "centrists" faced the task of keeping the far left and the ultra-right at bay—even though the support of both these groups cut across military and civilian arms of government. A divisive middle had to be secured; dependence not so much in its own ideological terms as in opposition to "extremist" views. Thus a balancing act began: concessions to the left, favors to the right, while keeping the center, itself in a state of flux, moving forward—or, at least functioning. The young

soldiers were involved in the politics of being above politics. The delicate art of court dancing had begun.

May Days and Counter-Coup One

On May 1, 1980, Minister-President Chin A Sen publicly announced his "Government's Declaration" which proclaimed the "first" Republic of Suriname dead and the birth of the "new" Republic. His detailed program, which did not once mention the word "socialism" emphasized "social justice" and fairness: increased educational opportunities, expanded medical care and facilities,

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rights for married women, increased opportunities for the poor, government health insurance, old age pensions, a workable irrigation and drainage system, a coherent national development scheme, a non-aligned foreign policy, elections in 1982, and the weeding out of those old bogey men, corruption and malaise. Dr. Chin A Sen proscribed a mild treatment, which for the "moderates" is still being used as the prototype for change. With typical Surinamese pride and pragmatism the Minister-President seemed to be telling the public "fair is fair and in your heart you know its right." Many, however, accused Chin A Sen and his allies of delivering too little, too late.

Nor was the military dragging its feet. Early after the coup they set out to "clean up the bureaucracy. The soldiers ordered that each civil servant would be at his desk promptly at the beginning of each day, not disappear over break, and stay on through the entire work day. Common criminals were brought to the army base and summarily flogged; the streets were cleaned daily; garbage was picked up three times a week; buildings were repainted; and motorcyclists were instructed to wear helmets. The working class rulers wanted to see things organized neatly and done with disciplined, mechanical efficiency. Tropical Calvinists, they made the old colonial system run efficiently. However, robust talk about the "new moral order" took place in a structural and ideological vacuum. Unconvinced, the bulk of the citizenry at best gave the military the "benefit of the doubt." The old Surinamese cynicism was reemerging and would be reinforced by the mysterious and, as yet, unclear events of May.

In early May an alleged counter-coup (the so called "right wing Ormskirk coup") brought the first serious tremors of fear to the country. Rumors flew through Suriname's "mouth newspaper" that an armed

invasion force of 200-300 Surinamese, Dutch, European, and Moluccan mercenaries had landed in neighboring French Guiana from Europe. Other than military press releases there is no concrete evidence to indicate that any such landing or planned invasion ever occurred. Only Ormskirk and another person in his company were "captured" in Suriname. Letters in their possession, and addressed to several Surinamers, incriminated them and their "intentions." Copies of the letters were never made public. Ormskirk was beaten to death and those persons to whom the letters were addressed were jailed, seriously mistreated, tortured, and suffered permanent physical damage at the hands of the leading figures in the military. By June, those in detention were turned over to the civilian authorities and provisionally released. A former officer in the Surinamese army who had refused to join with the original commandos, and now resident in Holland, was accused of collaboration and sentenced in absentia.

The alleged May counter-coup threw internal military cleavages into sharp relief. Ideological and personal factions appeared. Sergeants Sital and Mijnsals, participants in the original commando group, ranking member of the National Military Council, and sympathizers of the leftwing Volk Partij (People's Party) were known to be dissatisfied with the pace of the "revolution." They had a following in the army and allies in and out of civilian government. Any furtherance of their ambitions would be at the expense of former Sergeant Bouterse, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and self-promoted to the rank of Major.

Sital and Mijnsals were known to be impressed with the Cuban and Grenadian revolutions and decried the events in Suriname as "conservative." Suriname sent a delegation to Nicaragua in July 1980 to attend the celebrations for the anniversary of that country's revolution. Sital was there and in a meeting with Fidel Castro was reportedly encouraged to promote the revolutionary struggle. Conflict with Minister-President Chin A Sen and denunciations of Major Bouterse followed as Sital, Mijnsals and their civilian allies (members of a radical spin off of the Volks Partij calling itself the Revolutionaire Volks Partij) called for Cuban advisors, nationalization of major industries and a "real" revolution in Suriname.

Trouble on the Left: The August Counter-Coup

Early in August 1980 a group of seven civilians and soldiers allied with Sital and Mijnsals gathered at a hotel outside Paramaribo. They claimed they met only to discuss and evaluate events since February 25. One week after their meeting they were arrested, jailed without trial and charged with formulating a "left wing" coup.

Major Bouterse then cleaned house and made himself unquestionably the most powerful man in Suriname. Issuing the first of what were to become a number of decrees (Algemeen Decreet A), signed only by himself, he declared a renewed state of national emergency, abolished the constitution, sacked President Ferrier, promoted Minister President Chin A Sen to President and Chief Executive, and installed the "Military Authority" (Het Militaire Gezag)—composed of himself and two other sergeants—as an integral and official part of the governing machinery. Government powers since that time have been jointly exercised by civilian authorities appointed by the military, the newly organized Military Authority, and the National Military Council. The division of formal and informal power between these three groups, and within them, is opaque, changeable, and undefined.

Bouterse claimed that his actions gave the "revolution" a "new start." Others were less generous, pointing out that he only succeeded in anchoring the ship of state dead in the water between the "left" and the "right." By dismissing President Ferrier and abolishing the constitution, any return of the old parties and politicians by electoral means was squelched. By landing a blow to Sital and Mijns he was rid of his ideological adversaries and power competitors. Although his personal power was immense he drew a great deal of strength from the so-called moderates in military and civilian government. The "center" held, yet it was more of a "mathematical center" than an ideological one: left is cancelled out, right is cancelled out, and the center is what remains.

Nevertheless, definitions of socialism were rampant. "Socialism isn't communism, is it?" was a regularly asked question. Sighed an elderly woman who was active in pre-coup politics, "Socialism means punishing us and making strangers come live in my house." A teenage entrepreneur selling crushed ice cones wanted to expand his operation to two push carts, one of which his brother could operate, but was afraid because "government will take it away from me if I have more than one." One local intellect with access to the mass media defined socialism as "loving people," capitalism as "loving money," and communism as "not loving anything." The propaganda mill was churning but not delivering.

Businessmen complained that people were not buying extras and durables and they were afraid to invest or expand. Money was being secreted out of the country or taken out of banks and circulation and hidden. A poor woman in one of Paramaribo's low status neighborhoods bought canned food and hoarded it because a young conscript soldier told her "something is going to happen." A highly placed finan-

cial official told me in reply to a question about foreign investment, "The outside world is being very patient with us; I just hope we don't collapse internally."

Trials and Tribulations

On September 9 a decree was issued calling for the establishment of a "Special Tribunal" to deal with crimes of corruption under the former government and the offenders who were involved in the alleged left coup of August. The hapless Arron, arrested and released, was rearrested for trial. It was

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not clear exactly what the charges would be and certain civilian officials were critical of the move. Renewed publicity, it was felt, would serve only to open old wounds—never really conclusively dealt with. In fact, Arron never was tried by this special body and remained in jail until his latest release in February 1981. Creole Sunnamers, especially those members of the former party headed by Arron felt that the treatment given him was a personal attack on them. They were after all, the thousands and thousands of them, the "old politics" and were proud of it.

On December 11, the participants in the alleged left coup, who had been in jail since their August arrest, were given sentences of up to two years in prison. Graffiti by their supporters appeared on walls and roadways: "Free Sital," "Free Mijns." Concerned citizens found the Tribunal objectionable because of its retroactive and vague definitions of corruption and establishment by decree. The profound sentiment among many Surinamers was fright. There was, they felt, no law in the land save the caprice of the military.

Early 1981 and the "revolution" was bogged down; cynics referred to it as the "administrative revolution." An old politician told me: "Politics in Suriname is still a game, still a game. But this time there is no way out." A young cabinet minister said; "Do you know what we are up against? Time is running out and we have to change Suriname from a foreign owned plantation composed of laborers to a country comprised of citizens." In his dismay he recounted the story of having the locks changed on his office door. Six government workers came; five played cards, smoked cigarettes and supervised. The military was

growing frustrated and, under increasing pressure to deliver, expected sabotage when even the most elaborate of long term programs were not completed immediately. They held doggedly to the belief that all problems can be overcome if the right orders are given.

In an effort to promote the revolution and "change the mentality" of the masses, "People's Committees" (Volks Comités) were established by the military and administered directly by the National Military Council. They were designed to act as a communication device between grass roots groups and the Military Council. They function to promote development and politicize the masses. Although no particular ideological model was used, conservatives denounced the innovation as a marked swing to the left. Supporters of the old political parties—themselves already highly politicized!—dismissed the Volks Comités with a sharp hiss of the teeth and critique that "young boys are telling us what to do." Ridicule, a time honored weapon was applied to the new military. When an older woman was asked about the degree of neighborhood participation in a local Committee she replied, "People aren't stupid. If they want to pave our streets, install electricity, or throw a block party, we'll take it. But they will never pull the beliefs from our hearts."

On a propaganda trip to the rural district of Coronie to promote a local Committee, the military leadership resorted to promising abundant development money if the Coronians would lend their support. Music, dancing, food, drink, speechifying, gossip, promises, and private deals followed. Indeed, this was politics. In a cloud of dust the military went back to Paramaribo leaving the Coronians to go about their business. The old Suriname adage seemed to be holding true: "Winti wai, lanti pai" (The wind blows and the government pays).

Meanwhile, President Chin A Sen was mustering civilian and public support by promoting his "Government's Declaration," first delivered in May of the preceding year, through a "meet the people" campaign. He met with members of religious communities, commercial organizations, and labor unions. The Doctor, separate from the military, seemed to be piecing together support for the civilian government as the "last best hope." A ground swell of national support did not greet the military chiefs at the first anniversary of the revolution. Major Bouterse was booed by high school students. The streets of Paramaribo cracked with the news that a young woman stood up to him and implored "When will you let us have our freedom back?" Major Bouterse and his allies in the military were sailing on unsettled waters.

It is possible that the military anticipated a glum reception for just prior to the celebra-

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Prime Minister Arron, who had been in power since late 1980, was released from jail. Deliberations followed in the military high command and the leadership of Arron's old Creole party in the East Indian block. The military suggested that the military could gain support and that it was possible to lead parties through their manipulation, who could deliver it. The military hurried from making a compromise, observers claim, would link the military to the coup or force them to declare

Box and Coup Three

The military command made a move to the left and released from jail Sital, Mijns and a company who were involved in the alleged coup of August. Public respect for law was low. On his release, the excited general announced that the socialist would advance without compromise if need be. Another wave of military sweeps Paramaribo and spectres of military and radical politics panicked many. A highly placed official, disappointed by the military outburst, claimed, "The careful planning of Chin A Sen over the past year [in building up support for his 'Government Declaration'] was destroyed by that military outburst."

The three released NCOs were returned to their positions in the army. Newspaper photographs showed them in comradely conversation with their ex-jailors. Press conferences were quickly organized and Major Bouterse tried to calm the citizenry. "The matter is in hand and it is business as usual." This was not comforting news. Highly placed observers involved in the administration of justice explained that the release was for tactical reasons only. With growing dissension among groups impatient with the timetable of the revolution and opposed to the course of events, the release of Sital and Mijns was a sop less they become martyrs.

In the space of one month the military high command had released Arron, personification of the old guard and its politics; and renewed its contract with Sital and Mijns, military vanguards of the "radical" left revolution. The civilian government seemed to be holding firm in support of President Chin A Sen's Government Declaration of May 1980. Like the military, they too agree that the old patronage structure which flourished under parliamentary democracy was unacceptable.

The military-civilian center had its dancing partners strung out far to the left and right. In the grossest of terms the conservatives included the police, still smarting from the embarrassment of the coup; large labor unions tied to the civil service and big business; religious organizations; the business and commercial community; and the remnants of the old ethnic-based political parties. The "far left" numbered the released sergeants and their followers among certain groups in the military, a radical spin off of a former leftist party, and supporters in one large labor union. The public, growing in-

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creasingly outspoken, aligned publicly with no one.

Suriname's third alleged counter-coup occurred in mid-March 1981 and ended in the death of one soldier and the serious wounding of another. The accused organizer was a sergeant and a member of the original coup commando unit. Counter-coup three was denounced by the military leadership as "rightest." Fleshing out the spare details offered in the censored press, the rumor mill drew its own conclusions. "The leader was self-seeking and wanted to seize power for himself." "He was supported by the local business community." "It was an attempt by the Chinese merchant community...." One explanation proposed that it was not a counter-coup at all. Rather, the alleged leader of the alleged coup was trafficking in narcotics, did not pay his bills on time, and was killed by angry dope merchants. The press did not provide clarification. Disbarred from journalistic investigation, they fed the public what they were fed.

It is as difficult now as it has been over the past year to identify "who is in control." Power has fragmented within and between the military and civilian governments. The situation in April 1981 was tense as the military realized that its position had been weakened. Mused one official, "We are on the brink of a power vacuum, and if those boys [the army] are pushed too far they may come out shooting."

The public is cautious and watching like "cats looking from the trees." Military leadership seems to have underestimated the talent and flexibility of its countrymen and women. Surinamers are hard to fool and behind their friendliness, generosity, and good manners there is a solid sense of discipline and a strong sense of what is "fair." Strangely enough it was the new

military, all young and many from the working and lower classes, who miscalculated the values of the bulk of the population. "They don't respect people," decried a middle age woman. The ultimate Surinamese denunciation. Another person, a hardline supporter of an old political party, said "Look, they have done some good things; people go to work on time; I can always find a civil servant at his desk; welfare payments come on time now and corruption is under control. So why don't they go back to the barracks now?"

Patience with the situation has been all but lost by everyone regardless of their position. Many have suggested that a greater freedom of public criticism would have led to more restraint by the military with respect to the very excesses that drove the public away from them. By muzzling the press, the soldiers did no more than assure that the public would distrust them.

What Next?

Suriname is a small scale society. Nearly 70 percent of the population lives in and around densely packed Paramaribo. "If the day comes, will the soldiers shoot?" one can legitimately ask. A usual reply is "Do you think one will shoot the other's uncle or brother?" Most people realize the damage that would be done to the fabric of Surinamese society if there was even a short burst of violence and bloodshed. Since the 1980 coup less than ten people have lost their lives; there have been no official executions. Civil war is widely dismissed as impossible. Nevertheless, serious problems remain. A constitutional government was overthrown. Admittedly, the political system was held together with patronage, cronyism, and a "buddy system" (vriendjes politiek) designed to redistribute wealth and prestige up and down the hierarchy and across networks of alliances. However, the old regime provided the citizenry with a framework of law and guarantees.

There is a "state of emergency" in Suriname. Although there are no exact restrictions on mass media the country's strong tradition of an uncensored press has suffered. Various military and, later, civilian authorities have taken it upon themselves to instruct editors not to publish anything concerning the government without first checking with them. The mandate is as vague as it is all encompassing. Foreign journalists have been intimidated, jailed, and forced to leave the country. Suriname editors have been arrested, detained, and, on several occasions, beaten.

By mid-1980 well documented cases of arbitrary arrest; indefinite detention; denial of due process; and instances of serious mistreatment, sometimes involving torture and permanent physical damage, were reported. A pattern is hard to establish; some cases involve persons thought guilty of

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of many crimes, individuals involved in the three alleged counter-coups, and politicians accused of corruption. Some cases were simply the personal vendettas of individual soldiers.

The most controversial decree, and the one that drew the most adverse international attention called for the creation of a "Special Tribunal" to deal with the allegedly corrupt practices of the pre-coup government. Justification was that such offenses were not covered adequately by conventional criminal law. However, the definitions of the offenses are objectionable on the grounds of their vagueness and retroactivity. For example, the decree which established the Tribunal also defines corruption as behavior or activity which violates "generally accepted ethical and moral norms of society, whether or not made punishable in the Criminal Code or any other law" (Decree B-9). Punishments provided tend to be different from and more serious than those allowed by ordinary law. Procedural matters, such as organizing council, were made difficult for the defense; while unlimited detention ex-

tensions ("...in the interests of public order...") could be ordered by the prosecutor.

However, there is a tendency in recent developments, especially among those civilians concerned with the administration of justice, to reestablish rule by law and fair treatment. Most say this feeling always was present but that in 1980 the civilians were at too much of a disadvantage to do anything. Gross abuses are slowly becoming a matter of the past. These positive short term gains are important, although well informed observers caution that in spite of an improving situation, they are concerned with the absence of legal or other guarantees to secure their victories and guard against future excesses.

"Suriname is not El Salvador" stated a current cabinet minister and indeed it is not. There is no gunfire on the streets nor civil war in the countryside. Death squads do not carry off and assassinate opposition factions. In many ways the ideological battlelines have not yet crystallized in Suriname and one can never be too sure who is fighting who. Nevertheless, there is the

widespread fear that the Uzi may be the one abiding symbol that characterizes this troubled era. A short lived stage play in Paramaribo posed the question that once you have Ba' Uzi (Brother Uzi) can you ever get rid of him?

Suriname suffers from a paralysis of leadership. The sergeants have grabbed a tiger by the tail and are hanging on for dear life. The position of the civilian government is at best precarious. Public uncertainty has not been diminished by the reports of three counter-coups. Surinamers have seen bad times before and it has not lessened their patriotism. They realize that there will be no easy answers this time either.

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PAPA Gives Birth

Under the auspices of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Organization of American States, the first meeting of editors of periodicals dedicated to Latin America and the Caribbean was held in October at the OAS Headquarters in Washington. As a result of the meeting an organization provisionally named the Panamerican Periodical Association (PAPA) was formed.

The goals of PAPA are twofold: On the one hand, there are the general ends of creating mutual understanding among the Americas; articulating the culture and ideals of Latin America and the Caribbean; promoting intellectual and scholarly research about and for the Americas; advocating freedom of expression in the articulation and publication of ideas about the area; and, developing the institutional and finan-

cial support for the articulation, development, and publication of such ideas.

On the other hand, there are specific goals of furthering the ends of each of the member publications; fostering editorial excellence in the dissemination of their ideas; improving the development, readability, and placement of editorial manuscripts and materials; bettering the design and presentation of these materials; facilitating their technical reproduction; locating, soliciting, and developing proper publics for them; promoting knowledge of their availability; serving these ends by establishing such mechanisms as an editorial clearing house; cooperative relationships concerning mailing, distribution, and indexing; syndication services, etc.

Officers of the organization for the first year of activity are: Barry B. Levine, editor of the *Caribbean Review*, president; Dolores Moyano Martin, editor of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*, and Saul Sosnowsky, editor of *Hispanamérica*, vice-presidents; Celso Rodriguez, assistant editor of the *Inter-American Review of Bibliography*, secretary-treasurer; Alfredo A. Roggiano, editor of *Revista Ibero-americana*, and John P. Harrison, editor of the *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, advisors. Further information may be obtained by writing Barry B. Levine, *Caribbean Review*, Florida International University, Miami, FL 33199.